

BULLETIN OF THE
TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

established 1903.

<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield/tasfield.htm>

Editor : Don Hird.

Bulletin No. 295 (quarterly)

July 1999

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal *The Tasmanian Naturalist* annually in October. People with a range of background and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Genevieve Gates (03 6227 8638) for further information or write to GPO Box 68A. Hobart. 7001.

Programme

General Meetings start at 7.45 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania from Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance in Macquarie Street. *If you are planning to attend an outing but have not been to the meeting prior, phone to check as to the timing of the excursion as sometimes unforeseen changes occur.*

Thurs. 1 July.	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Tim Rudman, a botanist with Parks and Wildlife will talk on the perennial (and annual !) issue of <i>Weeds in the Tasmanian Environment</i> .
Sunday 4 July.	<u>10 a.m.</u> : An excursion in the Hobart area will follow up on Tim's talk.
Thurs. 5 August	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : David Pemberton will speak on <i>The Biology of Seals in Waters Around Tasmania</i> . David is Curator of Vertebrates at the Tasmanian Museum.
Sunday 8 August	<u>9 a.m.</u> : A boat visit to one of the hauling grounds for seals in SE Tasmania. Our preferred destination is <i>The Friars</i> off Bruny Island, another possibility is Hippolyte Rock off Eaglehawk Neck. Numbers will be limited by the size of the chartered boat and prior booking is essential. Cost is not known at printing of Bulletin.
Thurs. 2 Sept.	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Adrian Pyke, a Fire Management Officer with Parks and Wildlife, will speak on <i>Germination Ecology in Relation to Animal Scratchings and Diggings</i> . Note that the excursion is later this month, coinciding with the Federation Meeting.
17-19 Sept.	Federation meeting at Orford. Our Guest Speaker (on Saturday Evening) will be Professor Bill Jackson who will speak on <i>Fire Ecology</i> . We will be joined by other naturalists from around Tasmania. A full program will include a Fungi Walk in the Weilangta area guided by experts on the Saturday morning, coastal and intertidal walks and a slide show from the Marine Naturalists. Accommodation (including a hot meal on Saturday evening) is available. Book at a prior Club Meeting.

Phil and Sue Collier report We have been having some VERY cold nights in Canberra this last couple of weeks- down to minus 5 and 6. It is quite an experience cycling to work in such weather although the days following these frosty mornings are very pleasant. We have been busy this autumn planting lots of native plants in our garden after clearing out the exotic "jungle" that the previous owners left us.

We had a great trip in March/April to Broome. We spent one week at the BBO (Broome Bird Observatory) attending a course "Wave the Waders Goodbye". Would you believe we met Len & Marjorie's son-in-law who was doing some sound recordings there. What a small world we live in ! The course was excellent value, very professionally run, and a memorable experience; seeing thousands of waders leaving for Siberia. If any birdo's are interested, the course is usually programmed every year. One word of warning - it was very hot and humid. We also had a rather wet trip to the Kimberley with a number of "boggings". The highlight was seeing a number of Gouldian Finches for the first time.

We were interested to hear that Don is back later this year - it seems like only yesterday that he left.

The bushwalking here is not as difficult or spectacular and so we get back to Tasmania whenever we can. We managed a very good trip to Mt Gould in the late summer. There are however some very good spots in the Snowy Mountains in NSW which we have enjoyed this summer.

Regards to all at TFNC. If we happen to be in Hobart on the right evening we will try to make it to a meeting.

Sue and Phil Collier.

A new booklet on **Finding and Identifying Tasmanian Insects** is available.

Illustrations in Pen and ink by Janet Fenton, a club member, are a feature. It is available from the Environment Centre, Bathurst Street, or see Janet at a meeting.

New Bulletin Editor-; Don Hird

I am resuming editorship of the Bulletin after time in the outer islands of PNG. Thanks to Andrew for his work on the Bulletin over the last 10 issues.

After a big and varied experience in two years in PNG, I still find myself tussling with culture shock after six months back (so much cargo everywhere here !).

On the conservation front I had hoped to return to real progress on the area that I know best, native mammals. Extensive reports into ensuring comprehensive reservation status for all species, and on the State of the Environment generally, were underway as I departed. I must say that I am very disappointed in their results.

Certainly there has been much money recently expended in these and other areas of "the environment", but apparently little progress on the ground in biological conservation. Even for species of national significance such as the Bettong and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot we apparently still don't have adequate reserved habitat or even detailed characterisation of basic biology and minimum reserve size required for sustaining viable populations. A major concern has to be the "once and for all" basis of Telecom-sale based and similar expenditure and reporting, we won't fix continuous issues in *ad hoc* ways.

Contrast this to Victoria where cooperation between naturalists and government has produced detailed mammal distribution maps and habitat types. Tasmania has incurred massive habitat alteration from woodchip and other forestry, and from 1080 poisoning, compared to Victoria in recent decades. And yet, despite the collateral damage to non-target species, there has been remarkable little dialogue, cooperation or compensatory research and conservation in Tasmania.

It's not too late to make progress in these areas, but it is disappointing to see the continuing "shouting across the abyss" conservation debate in Tasmania. We needn't panic but we do need effective conservation leadership to prioritise, and, above all, to maintain dialogue.